

The works collectively of the best writers in the language, of those especially who may be called the moderns of the language, have created and substantially fixed a standard of general phraseology. If any department is exempted from the authority of this standard, it is the low one of humour and buffoonery, in which the writer may coin and fashion phrases at his whim. But in the language of the higher, and of what may be called middle order of writing, that authority is the law. It does indeed allow indefinite varieties of what is called style, since twenty able and approved writers might be cited, who have each a different style; but yet there is a certain general character of expression which they have mainly concurred to establish. This compound result of all their modes of writing is become sanctioned as the classical manner of employing the language, as the form in which it constitutes the most rectified general vehicle of thought. And though it is difficult to define this standard, yet a well-read person of taste feels when it is transgressed or deserted, and pronounces that no classical writer has employed that phrase, or would have combined those words in such a manner.

The deviations from this standard must be, first, by mean or vulgar diction, which is below it; or secondly, by a barbarous diction, which is *out of* it, or foreign to it; or thirdly, by a diction which, though foreign to it, is yet not to be termed barbarous, because it is elevated entirely above the authority of the standard, by some transcendent force or majesty of thought, or a superhuman communication of truth.

I might make some charge against the language of divines under the first of these distinctions ; but my present attention is to what seems to me to come under the second character of difference from the standard, that of being barbarous. The phrases peculiar to any trade, profession, or fraternity, are barbarous, if they were not low ; they are commonly both. The language of law is felt by every one to be barbarous in the extreme, not only by the huge lumber of its technical terms, but by its very structure, in the parts not consisting of technical terms. The language of science is barbarous, as far as it differs arbitrarily, and in more than the use of those terms which are indispensable to the science, from the pure general model. And I am afraid-